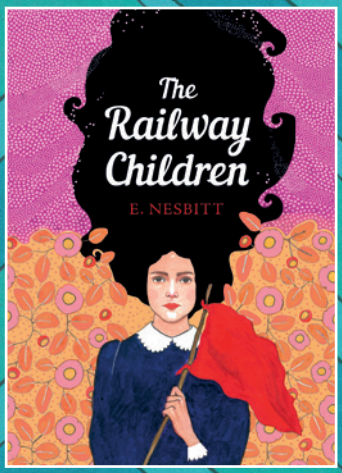
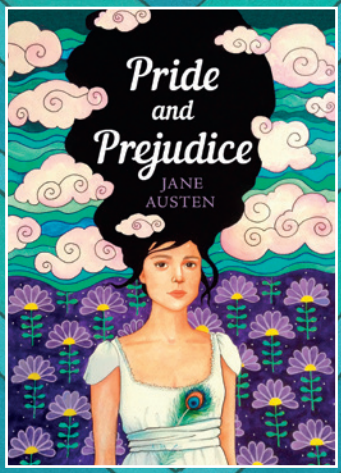
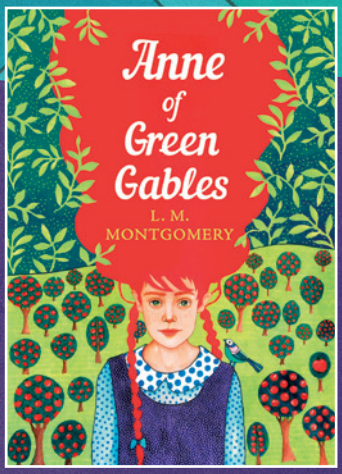
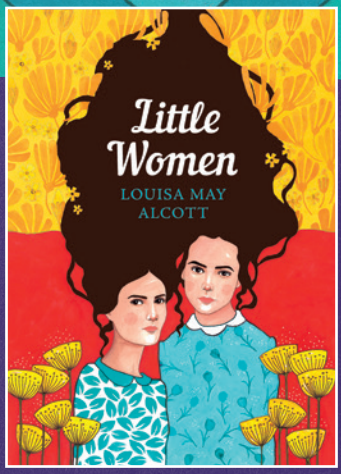
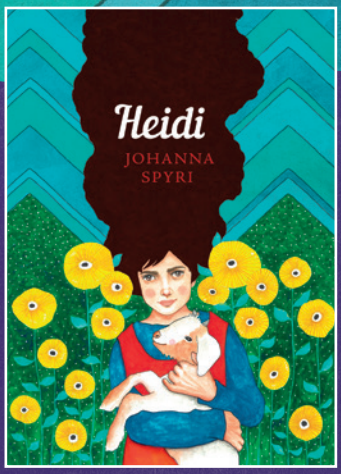
# THE SISTERHOOD






Cover illustrations by Hülya Özdemir

Schools

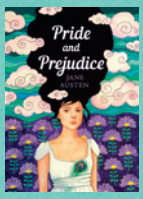
International Women's Day

# Little Women Book Club Questions

1. What do the first nine lines of the novel tell us about the contrasting characters of the four March sisters?
2. *Little Women* is set in the years during and after the American Civil War and the war is often alluded to. Do you think this critical to the story, or could it have been told in any other setting or time?
3. Louisa M. Alcott was a supporter of women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery – do these values come through in the book?
4. How relevant are the trials and tribulations Jo faces to the modern reader? Do young women today face similar issues?
5. Jo has a masculine sounding name and Alcott sometimes describes her in a male way, such as when she examines her shoes in a 'gentlemanly manner' or that she will bear her unhappiness 'like a man'. Why do you think the author does this?
6. Towards the end of the book Aunt March is trying to dissuade Meg from marrying impoverished Mr Brooke, and declares: 'You ought to marry well and help your family; it's your duty to make a rich match.' But Meg defies her and accepts his proposal for love. Alcott herself never married. What do you think she is saying about marriage in *Little Women*.
7. Which social media channels do you think the March sisters would use today?
8. What effect does Mr March's absence have on the March sisters? What effect does it have on Marmee? Do you think events would have panned out differently if he had been home?
9. The book contrasts the lives of the rich and the poor in descriptions of the Kings, Gardiners, Laurences, Marches and Hummels. Does the author imply any moral judgements associated with money, or lack of it.
10. How do you feel about Amy burning Jo's book? Do you think Jo would have forgiven her so soon if Amy hadn't fallen through the ice when they went skating?
11. In Hannah's opinion 'work was the panacea for all afflictions'. Do you see work as one of the themes of the book? How broadly do you think the author defines the concept of work?
12. How do the Marches compare with the Kardashians? Are there any similarities? Do they share any values?

# Anne of Green Gables
# Book Club Questions

1. Anne's red hair is iconic, yet a recent independent edition of the books portrays Anne on the cover as a blonde. Do you think this matters? How important do you think her red hair is in the novel? What symbolism, if any, does it have?
2. Mark Twain described Anne as 'the dearest and most moving and delightful child since the immortal Alice [in Wonderland].' Why do you think he was so enchanted by her?
3. When Matthew Cuthbert brings orphan Anne Shirley home to the farm he shares with his sister, Marilla, she says, 'But we asked for a boy. We have no use for a girl.' What does the book reveal about prevailing gender attitudes of the time?
4. We see Anne mature as the book progresses, but arguably she doesn't really change inside. However, she does have a huge influence on the people around her. What changes does she effect in the other characters, particularly Marilla?
5. Like J. K. Rowling with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, L. M. Montgomery struggled to find a publisher for *Anne of Green Gables*. But when she did, it was a runaway success, being reprinted ten times in the first twelve months. Why do you think it was such an instant hit?
6. One of the most striking aspects of Anne's character is her vivid imagination. Do you think her imagination helps or hinders her?
7. 'One can't stay sad very long in such an interesting world, can one?' is just one example of Anne expressing delight at the world around her. Given her harsh start in life, what do you think is at the root of Anne's eternal optimism?
8. *Anne of Green Gables* was banned as being subversive in communist-occupied Poland after the Second World War. What ideas and values espoused by the book do you think prompted this?
9. Schoolteacher Mr Phillips is openly infatuated with his pupil, 16-year-old Prissy Andrews, although nothing explicit is mentioned. Anne and her friends are fully aware of this but regard it as amusing. How do you feel about it in the light of today's #MeToo movement.
10. 'Reading stories is bad enough, but writing them is worse,' remarks Marilla when she learns about Anne's story club. What does the club reveal about Anne and her friends, and about Marilla.
11. Fashion is an important theme in the book. How does L.M. Montgomery use fashion to reveal character traits and societal attitudes?
12. Women of all ages and social statuses feature in *Anne of Green Gables*. Do any of the characters defy society's expectations of women at the time? If so, how? Do you regard *Anne of Green Gables* as a feminist novel?
13. Anne often criticizes her own physical features. Are there things about your appearance you would like to change? Can we learn anything from Anne about liking ourselves as we are?




# Pride and Prejudice
# Book Club Questions

1. We tend to think of 'pride' referring to Darcy and 'prejudice' referring to Elizabeth. But how do the two characters also display the other's failing?

2. 'It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife,' is one of the most famous opening lines in English literature. A key theme of the book is that marriage is an economic necessity for women. How much do you think that has changed. How much is marriage an economic necessity today?

3. Which social media platforms do you think each of the Bennett girls would prefer to use and why? Would any of them reject social media altogether?

4. Marriage to Mr Collins would not only have provided economic security for Elizabeth, but also for her mother and sisters. What does her refusal of Collins say about her attitudes to marriage and to her family?

5. Why did Charlotte marry Mr Collins? Do you think she should have done? Would you?

6. Do you think there is any significance in the fact that Austen named Jane Bennett, the sweetest character in the book, after herself.

7. Does the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* provide the basis for all Hollywood rom-coms?

8. *Pride and Prejudice* is a story about love and relationships, but no overt passion is shown. Do you think it is there, but bubbling beneath the surface, or do you think it is absent altogether? Would the book be improved if it were more explicit?

9. Two hundred years after it was written, *Pride and Prejudice* continues to find fans in each new generation, and many people read and re-read the novel. What do you think is the secret of its continued success?

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